

Hecla buys into Toronto firm, quits Utah mine unit

COEUR D'ALENE, Idaho (AP) — Hecla Mining Co. has acquired a majority interest in a Toronto company and has halted production at a Utah mining unit.

Hecla, based in Coeur d'Alene, transferred nine properties worth \$4 million and paid \$600,000 in cash to obtain majority interest in Acadia Mineral Ventures Ltd. of Toronto. The transactions took place last

month. Acadia will become the base for Hecla's Canadian exploration activities, said Hecla Chairman Arthur Brown.

Hecla ceased operations Sunday at its Apex Unit in southwestern Utah, citing a decline in the price of germanium and gallium. Forty workers, or

about half the Apex force, lost their jobs, the company said.

Hecla said it hopes to reopen the site when prices rebound or if it can find a less expensive way to produce germanium, gallium and other metals. The metals are used to make computer chips, microwave devices,

infrared lenses, fiber optics and other goods.

"We're optimistic the plant will operate again," said company spokesman William Booth.

Hecla bought the Apex Unit near St. George in 1989 to diversify into minerals other than silver and gold.

The plant was refurbished and started up in February. In Toronto, Acadia shareholders approved the friendly sale to Hecla on July 10.

The deal gives Hecla 11.5 million shares of Acadia common stock, or 52.5 percent, and control of the five-member board of directors. Brown is

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